

When the President delivered his State of the Union address to Congress earlier this week, I was joined by Sarah Cadogan, a Plainfield mother whose life was shattered by gun violence when her only son, Spencer, was shot to death on November 11, 2010. He was 17 years old. By all indications, he was a normal kid – smart, driven – who simply wound up in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As Sarah [has written](#), “He will never attend his high school prom, graduate from high school, serve his country in the military, get married, give me a grandchild, receive a degree in engineering, attend his nephew’s football games, his niece’s cheerleading competitions, and celebrate his sisters’ college graduations, weddings, and career achievements.”

Amidst her grief, Sarah has worked hard to find meaning in her son’s death. She has founded an organization called [Young Men of Resilience](#), helping high-school-aged young men in the Plainfield community achieve their full potential. Her organization provides mentorship, hosts forums, and gives seminars on topics such as character education, career planning, college preparation, and conflict resolution. She provides an anchor in the lives of young men who might otherwise be adrift – who might be at risk of becoming the victims or the perpetrators of gun violence.

Those of us in public office have our own responsibility to create meaning from the deaths of those like Spencer. As I’ve said to you before, we can’t just keep saying, “Our hearts ache for the victims and their families.” [We have to work to end gun violence](#) – not only, not primarily, the mass shootings, but the one-by-one gun deaths that add up to tens of thousands.

## Darwin Day

This Tuesday, February 12, was the 204<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of one the world’s greatest thinkers: Charles Darwin.

[I’ve introduced a resolution to honor the date](#) in future years as a ceremonial Darwin Day to recognize the importance of scientific thinking in our lives.

Only rarely in human history has someone shown a fundamentally new way of thinking about the world, an insight so revolutionary that it has made possible further creative and explanatory thinking. In my previous field of physics, we have Galileo and Newton and Einstein. In biology, at the top of any list would be Charles Darwin.

Without his insights – without his recognition that natural selection enables ever-increasing complexity and functionality and enables the development of ever-more wonderful forms of life – our modern understandings of biology, ecology, genetics, and medicine would be impossible, and our comprehension of the world around us would be vastly poorer.

### **Safer, Easier Payments from Social Security, the VA, and More**

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Sincerely,

Rush Holt  
Member of Congress